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Ambiguous characters: Cunning folk in the Swedish Ostrobothnian belief narratives.

ABSTRAKTI / ABSTRACT

Artikkelissa selvitetään, miten tietäjähahmot esitetään 1800-luvun lopulla ja 1900-luvun alussa ruotsinkieliseltä Pohjanmaalta kerätyssä uskomustarina-aineistossa. Aineistoa lähestytään kvalitatiivisen tekstianalyysin kautta. Esitän, että pohjanmaalaiset ruotsinkieliset uskomustarinat tietäjistä heijastavat ambivalentteja malleja liittyen taikuutta harjoittaviin henkilöihin. Uskomusaineistossa esiintyvät tietäjähahmot olivat yhteisön jäseniä, jotka paransivat sairauksia, löysivät kadonneita esineitä, ihmisiä ja eläimiä sekä harjoittivat vahingoittavaa noituutta. Artikkeli tarjoaa uutta tietoa vähän tutkitusta uskomusperinteestä ruotsinkielisellä Pohjanmaalla. Tietäjiin liitettyjä vernakulaareja uskomusmalleja voidaan hyödyntää myös muiden ruotsinkielisten alueiden perinteen tutkimuksessa. Tulokset osoittavat, että tietäjien hahmo edustaa uskomustarinoissa parantajaspesialisteja ja yhteisön jännitteiden säätelijöitä.

This paper examines the cunning folk tradition in Swedish-speaking rural Ostrobothnia according to textual folklore material collected at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Qualitative text analysis is used as a method to survey narratives from the region. I argue that Ostrobothnian Swedish-language belief narratives about cunning folk reflect ambivalent models about people who were considered to practise witchcraft. Consistent with prior research, the cunning folk of the Ostrobothnian narratives were members of the community who were able to heal illnesses, find stolen property and practise malevolent witchcraft. The article offers new localised information about vernacular beliefs in Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, an area that is often overlooked. The findings reported in this article could be applied to folklore material from other Swedish-speaking regions in Finland. It seems that there was an established narrative model for the cunning folk as specialized healers and regulators of communal tensions.

Keywords: cunning folk, vernacular beliefs, Ostrobothnia, belief narratives, witchcraft.

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Introduction

This paper concerns Swedish-language folklore in Ostrobothnia at the turn of the 20th century, which is an under-studied topic. The primary source material consists of belief narratives collected from the region at that time. The argument put forward is that belief narratives about the cunning folk in Ostrobothnia reflect an ambivalent attitude towards people who were thought to practise witchcraft. Given that material about vernacular beliefs was collected from Ostrobothnia in relatively large quantities, the analysis of source material from the region offers a unique insight into Finland-Swedish vernacular beliefs at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.[1] Procedures such as qualitative analysis of the narrative texts and finding out what communal models they communicated point towards a tradition that was current and established in the region.[2] All this brings new localised information to the study of cunning folk, and of witchcraft in general.[3]

The cunning folk were able to heal the sick, cure cattle, find stolen property and lost people, foretell the future and practise malevolent witchcraft.[4] The lack of physicians as well as the absence of police officers enabled them to carry out healing and detection tasks that in later decades were assigned to official authorities.[5] However, little is known about the people who visited the cunning folk and why they did so. Therefore, I focused my research on the belief narratives and what they reveal about vernacular models of cunning folk in the region.

Ostrobothnia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was a region comprising several rural villages that depended on agriculture and fishing.[6] Fields were located close to the farmhouses, and they were cultivated such that all the work had to be done at the same time. This created tensions among villagers and turned communities into socially close-knit enclaves in which the cunning people operated.[7] Living in the same community as most of their clients, the cunning folk exploited local gossip and tensions between people.[8] The Finland Swedish peasant culture rested on the concept of limited good, meaning that there is only a limited amount of good in the world.[9] Therefore, if one's neighbour was wealthier or had more agricultural products, it took something away from one's own property and supply.[10] It was possible to steal from or bring other people bad luck or ill-health via witchcraft, and the cunning folk were needed to identify the witch, for example.[11]

To shed more light on different aspects of local vernacular models of the cunning folk I approached the material according to the diverse themes it represents. First, I consider the communal models of the cunning folk that are represented in the belief narratives. Second, I look more closely at two of their deeds that are most frequently mentioned in the Swedish-speaking narrative data, namely finding stolen property or lost cattle and healing. Finally, I analyse the malevolent side of these magic-users. The next section describes the sources and the method applied in this article.

Sources

I collected textual material from the archives of The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (henceforth SLS) in Helsinki so that I could assess the extent and contents of Swedish-language belief narratives about the cunning folk. I went through narratives concerning 'people able to do witchcraft' ['*trollkunniga personer*'] and folklore collections from Ostrobothnia. The primary material analysed in this article consists of 272 Swedish-language belief narratives collected between 1879 and 1966 in Ostrobothnia. Narratives about the cunning folk fall into two categories: local narratives about named cunning folk or otherwise identifiable individuals[12] (158/272), and traditional narratives that are more general and do not identify individuals (121/272)[13]. Narratives about users of magic and witchcraft were gossip-like, based on speculation about local individuals and their practices, thereby reflecting communal norms and moral considerations.[14] These narratives therefore tell more about the community in which they were told than about certain individuals as such.

Lovisa Törndal was one of the individuals rumoured to practice witchcraft. Forsblom, Valter W. Lovisa Törndals Backstuga. (1916): SLS 269_6. CC BY 4.0. Source: SLS Finna

I chose to set aside the distinction between memorates and belief legends. My aim is to analyse what the local narratives convey about the role of the cunning folk in the belief narratives, and such a distinction yields no additional information on the subject.[15] I define 'vernacular' as the "voluntary cultural expression of communities"[16] as indicative of the creativity expressed in the folklore data.[17] With regard to Finland-Swedish folklore, it is difficult to know whether the informants believed the stories they told the collectors.[18] The question of whether the narrators believed these narratives is therefore impossible to answer. An analysis of the main themes of the narratives reveals communal models of the

cunning folk as representatives of communal knowledge of how a person with magical skills was thought to behave.[19] It could be argued that belief narratives contain collective models that are supplemented when they are shared with a wider audience.[20]

Witchcraft beliefs were more common in self-sufficient rural communities than in urban settlements, but they were gradually affected by economic and industrial change.[21] Changes, especially in the development of medicine, influenced how the cunning folk and their practices were narrated. It is mentioned in nine accounts that people previously believed in witchcraft and in the cunning folk,[22] or that it was rare for them to turn to cunning folk.[23] These narratives reflect the experiences that Éva Pócs had with her interviewees concerning beliefs about Romanian non-Christian demons *lidéric* and *szépasszony*.[24] Narratives concerning these characters implied that they belonged to the past. This dismissive stance as well as the rationalisation of such beliefs were clearly addressed to the collector, at least on some level. A similar situation may also have arisen in the case of Ostrobothnian folklore. There are indications that the interviewees situated their experiences and narratives about the cunning folk in the past, possibly because they thought that collectors of folklore did not share their beliefs even if they were contemporary.[25]

The narration of vernacular beliefs to collectors who were not part of the community led to the formation of the negative legend as a category. According to Pócs, "This text type turns the supernatural into the rational, dispelling certain beliefs and, at least on the surface, manifesting disbelief and doubt through the use of evidence." Nevertheless, fear of the supernatural and a desire to suppress belief in these beings is still present in the narratives.[26] I suggest that this also applies to Swedish-language vernacular beliefs about the cunning folk. Belief narratives were still told about them, but with sceptical undertones. Even though the cunning folk possessed knowledge that other members of their community did not, they were not necessarily thought to have used supernatural powers.[27] It was said of Himis Heik, for example, that he laughed at any kind of superstition,[28] and that he used his tricks to scare his patients and to make them feel uncomfortable.[29] Moreover, the reasons why people sought help from the cunning folk were not necessarily connected to beliefs.[30] Let us now consider the generalised communal models of the cunning folk based on the source material.

General models of the cunning folk

In 1867 the periodical *Österbotten* published an article about witchcraft ['*widskepelse*'] in Ostrobothnia, which lists malevolent witchcraft, finding stolen goods and healing as the main tasks of a wise man or woman.[31] This listing is very similar to the social needs the cunning folk fulfilled in their society as reported in modern research. I intend to focus on these tasks in this article and to leave aside other characteristics such as divination, which appears rarely in the source material.

Most of the cunning folk mentioned in the narratives are male. This is in line with findings from Finnish-speaking regions, the assumption being that men have more personal power than women.[32] The gender divide is also distinguishable in the terms used about the cunning folk: *trollkarl*, *kåkelgubbe* or *trollgubbe* ['male witch'] is used in 80/272 instances whereas *trollgumma*, *kåkelgumma* or *trollkäring* ['female witch'] is used in only six. Curiously, the ratio is slightly reversed in the case of *kloka gubbe* ['wise man'] 4/272 and *kloka gumma* ['wise woman'] 5/272. On a terminological level, the cunning folk have been called witches. It was believed in rural Finland that witches took revenge for wrongs done against them, such as being denied food or other supplies, being cursed and accused of causing illness or other kinds of magic-induced harm.[33] Witches who stole butter luck or cattle were an economic threat to society.

Cunning folk, on the other hand, were seen as providers of healthcare rather than as a threat.[34] Most belief narratives about witches living in the community concern those who stole luck during annual festivities, whereas narratives about the cunning folk are more nuanced.[35] Explicit accusations of witchcraft do not appear in the Finnish sources, which nevertheless refer to the harm-doing of witches being reversed by magical means.[36] The dichotomy between a nameless, purely malevolent witch and a cunning person is made clear in this example of communal knowledge: "Healers did not want to be recognised as male witches or witches, just as the people who visited them did not want to be recognised as seeking help from people the Catechism explicitly characterised as similar to "the Devil and his followers."[37] To distinguish "witches" from the cunning folk on a narratological level, I have focused on the general context of the narrative: "When someone was suffering from pain, s/he got him/herself three stoups of hard liquor and went to see a *trollgubbe*. - -"[38] For example, in this instance the healing is sought from a *trollgubbe*, signifying that in this case a male witch was not considered as a purely malevolent person. However, it is difficult to draw the line between witches and the cunning folk in the narratives, and the categories overlap in many cases.[39]

The narratives mention the occupations of cunning folk with regard to five local men: "[Himis-Hejk] lived in Staversby [a village in Korsholm] and was a shoemaker,"[40] "Riback the Smith, who was a "witch man", healed pains and said something about the Virgin Mary's blood and other terrible things,"[41] Silver Smith [Fi. '*Håpiaseppä*'] and Bjurör's Kal who was also a shoemaker. All of these refer to artisan occupations except for one narrative about Moliis, an adjunct pastor.[42] Magical knowledge distinguished cunning people from other members of the community in a similar manner as master craftsmanship.[43] Among the belief narratives studied in this article are ten that explicitly refer to a healer using knowledge of which other people were unaware:[44] "An old man in Övermark "*lagade om*" (treated) his toothache with hard liquor but what he read over the hard liquor was a mystery. - -."[45] Magical knowledge was valued cultural capital that aroused a great deal of curiosity about a cunning person's deeds, and sometimes had unwanted consequences:[46] "A male witch was about to cure an ache. He walked around the church counter-clockwise and shouted that the doors should open but nothing happened: the reason for this was that some boys were listening."[47]

Those with specialised knowledge are identified as old people or wise people.[48] Other than that, the narrative material reveals nothing about why cunning folk might have started their practising or when in their lifetime they became aware that they had these skills.[49] Nevertheless, there are indications of vernacular model of how they acquired their skills. The social hierarchy of the community is implicit in the notion that secret knowledge could only be taught to a younger person.[50] Sometimes the cunning person used powerful charms that they did not wish to teach to anyone, but as soon as they imparted their knowledge to others they lost the power to heal.[51] Moreover, anyone who taught their healing methods to an older person lost their power.[52] This model also appears in a belief narrative in which the cunning person learns his/her craft from another witch ['*trollkarl*']: "In Kimo there lived a woman who was skilled in sorcery, called "Lorkon". She learned her skills from a male witch who had taken her to church - - ".[53]

Teeth were indicative of a person who was skilled in magic. According to two accounts, being born with teeth indicated that the child might grow up to become a cunning person.[54] This belief is known from other regions in Finland. Teeth were considered the hardest part of a human body, therefore they also contained the power of the cunning person.[55] Wearing a dead person's shirt to become a *trollkarl* belongs to this model of making oneself 'hard' to be able to use magic.[56] The loss of teeth in a cunning person was a sign of a loss of power, thus s/he should teach his/her skills to a younger person who still had all their teeth.[57] Powerful healers may well have needed their teeth to make them strong enough to

banish illnesses,[58] given that healers were supposed to hold a coin between their teeth.[59] However, according to Finnish narratives from Eastern Finland, hard material in the mouth could also replace the missing teeth that would have made the magical healer more powerful.[60]

The possession of magical skills to help members of the community often ran in families.[61] It is not explicitly stated in the Ostrobothnian narratives that the ability to heal, to fore-tell the future and to find lost goods ran in families, although Forsblom notes that the craft was handed down from father to son, from mother to daughter.[62] This could also be implied in several belief narratives that describe an older person teaching their skills to a younger one, as mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, it is not clearly stated even in these accounts that the younger person should be a relative of the older one. Nor are there belief narratives about certain families being more skilled than others in the work required from a cunning person. Belief narratives are about individuals, with little or no additional information about their families. It was forbidden to thank the cunning person for healing the patient. Instead, the client was expected to give a coin by way of acknowledgement,[63] even though there was not a fixed price for the treatment.[64] Conversely, it is implied in the Finnish material that the cunning folk were often paid in kind, not in money.[65] Moreover, according to the Swedish material, cunning people who took payment for their healing services would lose their skill.[66] However, loss of skills when taking payment for magical healing is not apparent in the local knowledge analysed in this article.

As well as having specialised knowledge, the cunning people were described as omniscient.[67] They knew who people were even though they had never seen them before, for example: "Himis Hejk in the proximity of Vasa recognized people even though he had not met them before. - - "[68] They were able to talk about a client's problem before the client had told them what was wrong, which increased trust in the cunning person's skills.[69] Narratives that represented a cunning person's power were about stopping animals and being able to heal from a distance, for example.[70] "Some people were thought to have power over livestock. One of them was Riback the Smith in Petalax. He could make the wildest horse stand still for shoeing. He spat on his hand and stroked the animal on the back so that he stood totally still and just shivered. - - Old Man Rös in Övermark had the same skill. Once he castrated a furious bull without binding it and turning it over."[71] As information about their extraordinary skills spread in the form of narratives, people knew where to go when they needed assistance.[72]

Having considered the general concepts, I now focus on the deeds that were required of successful cunning folk. Healing and finding stolen property emerge from the belief narratives as the most valued and frequently mentioned tasks, therefore I consider them in more detail below.

Healing as the main task of the cunning folk

Healing was the most important task a cunning person could carry out for the community.[73] The most difficult cases were given to the cunning folk who shared a culturally similar worldview with their patients.[74] The material includes 141/272 narratives about magical healing. According to Swedish-language folklore, the natural balance must be restored by a specialised healer.[75] Himis Hejk, for example, was asked to clean a sauna after people who had been there developed boils ['*bölder*']. It helped, even though no one knew what Himis Hejk did.[76] The reputation of a powerful healer hinged on personal charisma rather than formal authority, which is reflected in belief narratives about famous healers.[77] In some cases, the person who had bewitched the patient was far more powerful than the cunning person who was trying to cure the illness.[78]

It was a common custom to bring hard liquor for the cunning person.[79] They were entrusted to diagnose the illness and to establish who or what had caused it. When the origin was known, the cunning person used his/her specialised abilities to restore the patient's health.[80] This was done by using the hard liquor as an instrument from which to see where the illness had come from.[81] Alcohol was a strong healing instrument: 22/141 narratives of healing mention alcohol being consumed by the patient, or charms being read over it.[82]

Sand from the graveyard ['*liksand*'] and other substances related to the dead are mentioned as the cause of illnesses that only a specialised healer can heal in 17/141 narratives. The reasons why such substances caused illness vary. If the taking of bones from the graveyard caused the illness, the bones should be returned by a magical healer.[83] Visiting graveyards with a known cunning person or a with male witch ['*trollkarl*' and '*trollgubbe*'] as a cure is mentioned in eight narratives, and in this manner the natural balance was restored.[84] People do not need to be in direct contact with the dead to be infected: they might fear the dead or they might have accidentally looked into the dead person's eye and caught an illness in that way.[85] It is mentioned in one instance that a weak-nerved person could catch an illness crossing a place where there is *liksand*.[86] In this example, the weakness of the individual causes the sickness that would have otherwise been avoidable.[87] Having a strong nature is described in two other narratives as protection against magical harm.[88] Similarities among the causes of illness caught from the dead and having a strong nature to resist it indicate that despite language differences, the Swedish-language and the Finnish-language narratives represent parallel models.

Bones were used in witchcraft. Bone chamber from the Vörå graveyard. Hägglund, Erik. Benkammaren På Vörå Begravningsplats. (1910-1962): SLS 865 B 478. CC BY 4.0. Source: SLS Finna

Apart from curing illnesses, the cunning folk were also trusted to stop the flow of blood. Among the material analysed in this article are 15/141 narratives of blood-stopping. Langås-Mick, for example, stopped the flow by cursing so that the heart stopped beating in the chest.[89] Another example reflects the community's disapproval of using charms or magical healing: "Certain people could stop the blood but it was such a big sin that it was death in question, and that is why they did not repeat anything."[90] The power of these people was so strong that even their presence was enough to stop the blood from flowing,[91] or they could stop it from a distance.[92] This aligns with Finnish narratives about cunning folk

[Fi. '*tietäjä*'] who are able to staunch the flow of blood. In the Finnish material, the power [Fi. '*luonto*'] of the person who staunches blood emanates from his own body to the patient's from a distance.[93]

Medicine was not the only modern profession adopted by the cunning folk during the modernisation process. Another one was that of detective, as mentioned earlier. I will now consider this aspect, which is often mentioned in Ostrobothnian belief narratives.

Finding stolen property

The cunning people's skill in locating stolen property and naming the thief was valued in the community, and was something that no one else knew how to do.[94] There are 32/272 narratives that describe how a cunning person detects thieves, and finds lost property and cattle. Unlike the narratives on healing, those about lost or stolen property tend to be associated with local cunning folk.[95] The cunning person might have enforced client's suspicions of the most likely suspect, and in doing so he or she utilized local gossips.[96] However, thieves are seldom, if ever, named in the source material analysed in this article.[97] Narratives that describe how the cunning person detected the thief may be rather generalised in nature: "Lunda-Jonon in Övermark could see where the stolen objects had gone;"[98] or "one could retrieve stolen objects by using alcohol to see "who had stolen it." Patersko could see in the hard liquor and return things. - -."[99] However, the cunning person identifies the thief in several narratives, who is made to return the stolen objects.[100]

After all, fear of the cunning person was sometimes enough to make thieves confess or return stolen goods.[101] It is implied in Ostrobothnian folklore that the thief was forced ['*tvinga*'] to return goods thanks to the skills of the cunning person.[102] Detecting thieves using the forces of the dead is a common motif in the Finnish belief narrative.[103] A visitation to the church or the graveyard, or the ringing of church bells are mentioned in 10/32 narratives as ways in which the cunning person would retrieve the stolen property, and in two of these narratives the dead folk are mentioned as the force that will make the thief return the objects.[104]

The cunning folk were not always successful in finding stolen property, however. According to one belief narrative, Lurkon was not able to find the real thief even though she tried twice, and with the help of the dead.[105] Belief narratives that represent the cunning person as fallible might indicate that their powers were no longer so credible among the community.[106] The above-mentioned local narrative implies that Lurkon might not have been so skilled after all: she might have had a helper in a newly-dug grave shouting the names of the thieves, and she might even have stolen the silver roubles that were needed in the ritual.

The cunning folk in Swedish-language folklore were ambivalent characters who nevertheless followed vernacular models of how these people learned their craft and practised it. A person who knows how to practise benevolent witchcraft also knows how to perform malevolent supranormal tasks. An association between the cunning folk and the Devil is also present in the narrative data, as I discuss next.

Magical harm and the pact with the Devil

The Church's effect on vernacular beliefs about the cunning folk remains uncertain, although it could be argued based on the narrative sources that the Christian worldview affected the manner in which the use of magic was contemplated.[107] Given that there were still cunning folk in the 20th century, its critical attitude had clearly not extinguished such beliefs.[108] The reluctance to tell of vernacular beliefs in witchcraft might have had something to do with their current status in the community at the time of collecting. Such beliefs were considered non-Christian, although the folklore collectors were interested in them.[109] In addition, it was difficult for collectors to gain the trust of the interviewees such that they would share knowledge they had learned to hide from other members of the community and the clerical authorities.[110] The cunning folk fulfilled the role of vernacular healer and detective in their community, but on the other hand, local narratives indicate that they were associated with the Devil: they had sold their soul to[111] or were otherwise associated with the Devil.[112] These narratives are more general in nature, reflecting the community's moral view of people who practised witchcraft that extends to the common European motif of selling one's soul to the Devil for personal gain.[113]

Ambivalence in this context could be described as a maleficium-healing duality in which the cunning person acts in the belief narrative.[114] Although a cunning person might commit a sin by selling his/her soul to the Devil, s/he nevertheless had skills that benefitted the whole community, such as healing.[115] In general, those who could their powers to do good could also use them to do harm.[116] Eight of the narratives describe local rumours about a certain cunning person, such as Himis-Hejk or Lovisa Törndal, causing harm with their magical skills.[117] Narratives about the malevolence of cunning folk could also have served to balance social tensions within the community. It is claimed in one narrative that Himis-Hejk forced a woman who had spoken ill of neighbour's wife to run around the yard after the wife, and prevented her from coming back until he released her from his spell.[118] Narratives apparently expressing admiration of cunning people for their power, even if used a malevolently, may have strengthened their reputation as people who should be approached with caution.[119] Being considered dangerous also helped to protect cunning people and witches from thievery and other threats.[120]

Having defined the general models of cunning folk in the Swedish-language belief narratives from Ostrobothnia, I will end with some concluding remarks.

Conclusion

In sum, it is clear from the above discussion that the cunning folk's role in the narratives is to sooth communal tensions and to use their magical skills to restore the balance, whether it relates to health or property. They seemingly used hard liquor and the forces of the dead in their tasks. This represents a wider vernacular model of how a person with magical skills is characterised. These narratives reflect similar vernacular beliefs about the toughness of people dealing with magical harm or good, as Finnish-language studies have previously shown. This research demonstrates how the cunning folk were narrated in Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia. The results could be applied in a broader scholarly discussion of the cunning folk.

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[1] Susanne Österlund-Pötzsch and Carola Ekrem, *Swedish Folklore Studies in Finland 1828–1918*, The History of Learning and Science in Finland 1828–1918, 13 b (Helsinki: Societas Scientarium Fennica, 2008), 72–74.
[2] See also Laura Stark, "Sorcerers and Their Social Context in 19th–20th Century Rural Finland," *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 63 (2007): 7–29 on the continuity of Finnish-language magic-workers until the first half of the 20th century.
[3] See Willem de Blécourt, "Witch Doctors, Soothsayers and Priests. On Cunning Folk in European Historiography and Tradition," *Social History* 19, no. 3 (1994): 286–288.
[4] Owen Davies, "Cunning-folk in England and Wales during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Rural History* 8 (1997): 92; Timothy Tangherlini. ""How Do You Know She's a Witch?": Witches, Cunning Folk, and Competition in Denmark," *Western Folklore* 54, no. 3/4 (2000): 281; Alison Rowlands, "Witchcraft and Popular Religion in Early Modern Rothenburg ob der Tauber," in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology*, edited by Brian P. Levack (Routledge, New York, 2001), 166; Dirk Johanssen, "The Prophet and the Sorcerer: Becoming a Cunning-Man in Nineteenth-Century Norway," *Folklore* 129, no. 1 (2018): 39.
[5] Johanssen, *The Prophet and the Sorcerer*, 41.
[6] Bror Åkerblom, *Vörå sockens historia 1* (Vasa: Vörå kommuns förlag, 1962), 198.
[7] Åkerblom, *Vörå sockens historia*, 199–200; Stark, *Sorcerers and Their Social Context in 19th–20th Century Rural Finland*, 11–19.
[8] Stark, *Sorcerers and Their Social Context in 19th–20th Century Rural Finland*, 18–19.
[9] Ulrika Wolf-Knuts *Människan och djävulen: en studie kring form, motiv och funkton i folklig tradition* (Åbo: Åbo Akademis Förlag – Åbo Academy Press, 1991), 180; Laura Stark, "Narrative and the social dynamics of magical harm in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Finland," In *Witchcraft continued: popular magic in modern Europe*, edited by Willem de Blécourt and Owen Davies (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press 2004), 71–72; see also George M. Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist* 67, no. 2 (1965): 293–315.
[10] Toivo Vuorela, *Paha silmä suomalaisen perinteen valossa*. Kirjokansi 210 (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2019 [1960]), 15.
[11] Per-Anders Östling, "Rättegångar mot botare i Norrland och Svealand under 1600-talet," *Budkavlen* (2010): 70; Karolina Kouvola, "Travellers, Witches and Cunning Folk: Regulators of Fortune and Misfortune in Ostrobothnian folklore in Finland," *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 14, no. 1 (2020), 135.
[12] In this category I have included narratives that do not necessarily mention a name but which mention otherwise an identifiable marked such as "a woman in Närpes" ['*en kvinna i Närpes*'] (SLS 524, 287) or "an old man in Övermark" ['*en gubbe i Övermark*'] (SLS 524, 51). Collection FMK 158a contains two duplicant narratives about Lovisa Törndal by the same narrator. I have chosen to include another duplicant FMK 158a, 160 and FMK158a, 364 that tells about how Törndal acquired her knowledge from an older *trollkarl* because these two narratives are not identical in contents. However, I have chosen to exclude the other duplicate narrative about Törndal making the bride's nose bleed at her wedding because these two narratives are almost identical in their contents.
[13] Six narratives that mention a certain individual and also contain general knowledge are marked under both categories (SLS 220, 78; SLS 232, 20–22; SLS 506, 97–98; SLS 533, 22, 28; SLS 892, 274–275).
[14] Laura Stark, *The Magical Self: Body, Society and the Supernatural in Early Modern Rural Finland* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2006), 122–125; Kaarina Koski, *Kuoleman voimat: Kirkonväki suomalaisessa kansanperinteessä* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2011), 58–61.
[15] Sirkku Piispanen, *Kansanomainen moraali: Tutkimus savolaisista ja pohjalaisista uskomustarinoista*. Helsingin yliopisto 19, 10–19.
[16] Niina Hämäläinen, Kati Mikkola, Ilona Pikkanen, Eija Stark, "Miten kansasta tulee vernakulaari? Kansanrunoudentutkimuksen, kirjallisuushistorian ja kansankirjoittajien tutkimuksen kansakuva 1820-luvulta 2010-luvulle," *Elore* 27, no. 1 (2020): 49.
[17] Leonard Norman Primiano, "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife," *Western Folklore* 54, no. 1 (1995): 43–44.
[18] Ulrika Wolf-Knuts, "What can we do Today with Old Records of Folk Belief? on the Example of Devil Lore." *Folklore* 131, no. 2 (2020): 122.
[19] See Elliott Oring, "Legendry and the Rhetoric of Truth," *Journal of American Folklore* 121, no. 480 (2008) for discussion about the truth in the genre of legend.
[20] Vladimír Bahna, "Memorates and memory: A re-evaluation of Lauri Honko's theory," *Temenos* 51, no. 1 (2015): 14–15.
[21] Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999a), 282–286.
[22] E.g. SLS 232, 20–22; SLS 524, 308; SLS 531, 510.
[23] SLS 531, 147.
[24] Pócs, *"We, Too, Have Seen a Great Miracle: Conversations and Narratives on the Supernatural Among Hungarian-speaking Catholics in a Ro-manian Village."* In *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life: Expressions of Belief*, edited by

Marion Bowman, and Ülo Valk (London; New York: Routledge 2014 [2012]), 272–273. It should be borne in mind that the Catholic Church in Romania may have had a different approach towards characters with non-Christian beliefs than the Lutheran Church in Ostrobothnia. However, this question is beyond the scope of this article and it seems not to have affected how the interviewees expressed the belief narratives.

[25] Owen Davies, "Witchcraft accusations in France, 1850–1990," in *Witchcraft continued: popular magic in modern Europe*, edited by Willem de Blécourt, and Owen Davies (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 111–112. Sirkku Piispanen (2009, 122–126), who studied Savonian and Ostrobothnian belief narratives and their moral standpoints, concluded that from the 1930s onwards there were more mentions of events described in the narratives that happened before or that people believed in some way previously, but not any longer.

[26] Pócs, *'We, Too, Have Seen a Great Miracle'*, 272–273.

[27] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*. London: Penguin Books, 1991 [1971]), 226–227.

[28] SLS 533, 16b–17.

[29] SLS 533, 17–18.

[30] Johanssen, *The Prophet and the Sorcerer*, 51.

[31] "Om widskepelse," *Österbotten*, 06.07.1867, (101–102), https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/sanomalehti/binding/503157?page=1

[32] Laura Stark, "Gender, Sexuality and the Supranormal: Finnish Oral-Traditional Sources," in *More than mythology: Narratives, ritual practices and regional distribution in pre-Christian Scandinavian religions*, edited by Catharina Raudvere, and Jens Peter Schjødt (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2012), 161. This notion also follows Davies, *Cunning-folk in England and Wales*, 94.

[33] Stark, *Narrative and the social dynamics of magical harm*, 75–77, see also Birgitte Rørbye, "Den illegal sygdomsbehandling som folkloristisk problem: Bidrag til en socio-kulturel oversigt for Danmark." *Fataburen: Nordiska museets och Skansens årsbok* (1976): 209.

[34] Cf. Tangherlini, *"How Do You Know She's a Witch?"*, 283–284.

[35] See Kouvola, *Travellers, Witches and Cunning Folk* for different parties in narratives who affect the fortune and misfortune of the community.

[36] Stark, *Narrative and the social dynamics of magical harm*, 85–86; see Tangherlini, *"How Do You Know She's a Witch?"*, 280 about accusations of witchcraft and the cunning folk in Denmark.

[37] "Omlagarena vilja icke erkänna sig vara trollkarlar l. trollpackor like litet som de hjälpbesökande vilja tillstå att de sökt hjälp på ett håll, som katekesen uttryckligen betecknar som identisk med "djävulen och hans anhang." (SLS 218, 79). See also Stark, *Sorcerers and Their Social Context*, 20–21, 23–24.

[38] "Då någon led av värk, skaffade man sig 3 stop brännvin och for till en trollgubbe. - - " (SLS 533, 101–102)

[39] See also Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge, 1999 [1970]), 129; Richard A. Horsley "Who Were the Witches? The Social Roles of the Accused in the European Witch Trials," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9, no. 4 (1979): 695.

[40] "['Himis-Hejk'] bodde i Staversby och var skomakare." (FMK 158 a, 20). see also SLS 221a, 30. By way of comparison, the majority of English and Welsh cunning men had other occupations apart from their cunning activities (Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 127; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 295–296; Davies, Cunning-folk in England and Wales, 92–93).

[41] "Riback-smeden, som var "trollgubb", "laga om" för värken och sade något om Jungfru Maria blod och annat rysligt." (SLS 524, 47). FMK 158a, 588 mentions Risback-Jepp as a farmer but it is uncertain if this person is the same as the Riback-smeden from other narratives.

[42] SLS 212, 155. To my knowledge, this is the only narrative about Moliis' magical healing.

[43] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 177–178.

[44] e.g. SLS 524, 57, 305; SLS 533, 101–102.

[45] "En gubbe i Övermark 'lagade om' i brännvin för tandvärk, men vad han läste över brännvinet var hemligt. - - " (SLS 524, 51).

[46] Stark, *Narrative and the social dynamics of magical harm*, 74.

[47] "En trollgubbe skulle bota värk. Han gick "ansjus" kring kyrkan och ropade, att dörren skulle gå upp, men misslyckades. Orsaken var den, att några pojkar lägo och lyssnade på alltsammans." (SLS 533, 100–101).

[48] Raudvere, "Meeting Hardship, Illness and Malice. Valter W. Forsblom and His Documentation of Healing Practicies in Swedish-Speaking Finland 1913–1917," *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* 70 (2014): 156.

[49] Cf. Davies, *Cunning-folk in England and Wales*, 95.

[50] Raudvere, *Meeting Hardship, Illness and Malice*, 156; e.g. SLS 524, 283; SLS 533, 14; SLS 159, 47.

[51] SLS 524, 9, 299; See also SLS 65, 38 about Riback Joss who was angry with his deceased father who had taught him to find sites for wells.

[52] SLS 533, 16b.

[53] "I Kimo bodde en trolldomskunnig kvinna, som kallades "Lorkon". Hon hade lärt konsten av en trollgubbe, som hade tagit henne till en kyrka, - -." (FMK 158a, 160).

[54] SLS 199, 88; SLS 338, 4; Cf. Anna-Leena Siikala, "Miina Huovinen: En verbalextatiker från Fjärrkarelen," in *Botare: en bok om etnomedicin i Norden*, edited by Bente Gullveig Alver, Bengt af Klintberg, Birgitte Rørbye, and Anna-Leena Siikala (NIF Publications No. 8. Falköping: Gummessons Tryckeri AB, 1980), 58.
[55] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 306–307.
[56] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 313; SLS 533, 15.
[57] SLS 321, 116; SLS 524, 283, 302–303; Stark, *The Magical Self*, 280.
[58] SLS 533, 20.
[59] SLS 28, 55.
[60] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 280–281.
[61] Rørbye, *Den illegal sygdomsbehandling som folkloristisk problem*, 211; af Klintberg, *Hejnumkärringen*, 11; Siikala, *Miina Huovinen*, 57–59; Davies, *Cunning-folk in England and Wales*, 97; Tangherlini, *"How Do You Know She's a Witch?"*, 294; Östling, *Rättegångar mot botare*, 78.
[62] SLS 253, 8. See also SLS 232, 141.
[63] e.g. SLS 524, 67–68; 289; SLS 533, 14; SLS 527, 13.
[64] SLS 533, 15.
[65] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 178.
[66] Östling, *Rättegångar mot botare*, 77.
[67] af Klintberg, *Hejnumkärringen*, 26–29; SLS 221a, 38; SLS 267, 18; FMK 158a, 58.
[68] "Himis Heik i närheten av Vasa kände folk, fastän han aldrig sett personen i fråga förr. - - " (SLS 527, 69–70).
[69] Davies, *Cunning-folk in England and Wales*, 99.
[70] SLS 533, 27.
[71] "Vissa personer sägas ha makt över kreaturen. En sådan var Riback-smeden i Petalax. Han kunde få den vildast häst att stå stilla, då den skulle skos. Han spottade i handen och strök djuret över ryggen, det stod då alldeles stilla och bara darrade. – Den s.k. Rös-gubben i Övermark förmäles ha besuttit samma konst. Han kastrerade en gång en vild tjur, utan att binda och taga omkull den." (SLS 215, 53).
[72] Davies, *Cunning-folk in England and Wales during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, 103.
[73] af Klintberg, *Hejnumkärringen*, 17; Siikala, *Miina Huovinen*, 56; Hans Sebald, "Shaman, Healer, Witch: Comparing Shamanism with Franconian Folk Magic." ," in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology*, edited by Brian P. Levack (Routledge, New York, 2001), 322.
[74] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 210; Stark, *The Magical Self*, 346–347; Mirjam Mencej, "Unwitching: The Social and Magical Practice in Traditional European Communities," *Western Folklore* 74, no. 2 (2015), 120–122.
[75] Raudvere, *Meeting Hardship, Illness and Malice*, 155.
[76] FMK 158 a, 20.
[77] Sebald, *Shaman, Healer, Witch*, 313; See also Stark, *The Magical Self*, 388.
[78] Éva Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead: a perspective on witches and seers in the early modern age*. (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999), 112–113; FMK 158a, 160; see also Davies, *Cunning-folk in England and Wales*, 101; FMK 158a, 188.
[79] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 318.
[80] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 317–318; Östling, *Rättegångar mot botare*, 71.
[81] SLS 220, 206; SLS 524, 206, 284–285; SLS 531, 41–43; SLS 553, 289, 300–301.
[82] SLS 215, 42; SLS 220, 13–14; SLS 283, 283–284; SLS 280, 581–583; SLS 527, 192–193; 265, 266; SLS 534, 57, 68, 213–214; SLS 531, 41, 41–43, 47; SLS 533, 16b-17, 101–102, 104, 204; FMK 158a, 20, 160.
[83] SLS 524, 39; SLS 533, 23–24, 294–295. According to Valter W. Forsblom, only the most powerful healers were able to heal likfassna, an illness that had been caught from the dead (SLS 267, 210).
[84] SLS 524, 211; SLS 527, 14–15; SLS 533, 92, 99, 101–102, 284; SLS 892, 448–449; FMK 158a, 188.
[85] SLS 533, 285–286; SLS 527, 265; Stark, *The Magical Self*, 272; Koski, *Kuoleman voimat*, 222–224; for a description of Finnish *säikähdys* [Engl. 'fright'] see Stark, *The Magical Self*, 330–339.
[86] SLS 533, 300–301.
[87] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 315–317.
[88] SLS 372, 186–189; SLS 163, 21.
[89] SLS 524, 9.
[90] "Vissa personer kunde stämma blod, men det var så stor synd, att det var döden i fråga och därför upprepade de ingenting." (SLS 524, 8–9); see also SLS 533, 22 for an interviewee who had reluctantly learned to heal aches and stop blood-flow.
[91] SLS 524, 9.
[92] SLS 267, 18; SLS 524, 12; SLS 527, 21–22; SLS 533, 25, 27.
[93] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 300–303.
[94] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 252–253; Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951*, 221–227; Stark, *The Magical Self*, 190–193.
[95] 22/32 narratives mention a cunning person by name or location.
[96] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 257; Stark, *The Magical Self*, 193.

[97] Cf. de Blécourt, *Witch Doctors, Soothsayers and Priests*, 297–298.
[98] "Lunda-Jonon i Övermark kunde se, vart försvunna föremål tagit vägen." SLS 524, 293.
[99] "Man kunde återfå ett stulet föremål genom att se i brännvin "vem som stulit det." Patersko kunde se i brännvin och återställa saker. - -" SLS 521, 278.
[100] See SLS 521, 278; SLS 527, 510–511; SLS 531, 466; SLS 533, 19; FMK 158a, 161, 364, 495, for example.
[101] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 262; Stark, *The Magical Self*, 192–193; Stark, *Sorcerers and Their Social Context*, 17.
[102] FMK 158a, 364.
[103] Koski, *Kuoleman voimat*, 248; on the use of graveyards in detecting thieves in late-18th-century Northern Ostrobothnia and Kainuu, based on trial records, see Emmi Tittonen, ""Nouse ylös vanha väki, lastujen perään!" : Hautausmaiden taikuus 1700-luvun lopulla," *J@rgonia*, 6 (2008): 4–5.
[104] SLS 527, 514; SLS 531, 466.
[105] SLS 215, 66–68.
[106] Davies, *Cunning-folk in England and Wales*, 102–103.
[107] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 229–233; for Catechism and magical harm, see SLS 218,80.
[108] de Blécourt, *Witch Doctors, Soothsayers and Priests*, 295–296.
[109] Kati Mikkola, *Tulevaisuutta vastaan: Uutuuksien vastustus, kansantiedon keruu ja kansakunnan rakentaminen* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2009), 224–228.
[110] Carola Ekrem, ""Belysandet af vår allmoges andliga lif": Traditionsinsamlingen inom Svenska litteratursällskapet," in *Arkiv, Minne, Glömska: Arkiven vid Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland 1885–2010*, edited by Carola Ekrem, Pamela Gustavsson, Petra Hakala & Mikael Korhonen (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2014), 87; SLS 218, 81–82.
[111] SLS 163, 18–19, although Wolf-Knuts, *Människan och djävulen*, 202, notes that this narrative is from a lecture that was given to *Svenska landsmålsföreningen* and it might reflect the lecturer's thoughts instead of those of his informants; SLS 253, 357; SLS 324, 275. On the Devil's pact associated with witchcraft, see e.g. Bente Gullveig Alver & Torunn Selberg, "Folk medicine as part of a larger concept complex," in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology*, edited by Brian P. Levack (Routledge, New York, 2001), 10–11.
[112] SLS 211a, 27; SLS 218, 80; SLS 531, 41–43.
[113] Wolf-Knuts, *Människan och djävulen*, 202; Anna-Leena Siikala, *Mythic Images and Shamanism: A Perspective on Kalevala Poetry*. (FF Communications No. 280. Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2002), 80.
[114] Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead*, 12.
[115] Wolf-Knuts, *Människan och djävulen*, 205.
[116] See e.g. Tangherlini, *"How Do You Know She's a Witch?"*, 284; Östling, *Rättegångar mot botare*, 67.
[117] FMK 158, 119, 160, 161, 362–363, 364.
[118] FMK 158a, 20.
[119] Stark, *The Magical Self*, 249–250; Johanssen, *The Prophet and the Sorcerer*, 40.
[120] Stark, *Sorcerers and Their Social Context*, 21–23.